

I would like to invite you to turn in your copies of God's Word to Isaiah chapter 53. While some of you may not be as familiar with this prophetic book as you are with other books in the Bible, I believe it's safe to say that most here are familiar with this specific chapter. It is my hope that this morning, as you receive the Word in preparation to coming to the Table, you will see the beauty of the work of Christ in a greater way in this text. So lend your attention now to the reading of God's holy Word from Isaiah chapter 53.

Read Isaiah 53

Pray

Last Spring I took a trip to Colorado Springs, and before I went to the airport to fly back to Pittsburgh I was able to make a quick trip to the mountains. As I was on this mountain overlooking Cheyenne Canyon I was amazed at the magnitude of the mountain itself. When you're right up against or on top of a mountain then that singular mountain's magnitude is seen clearly. But when you come off of that mountain and you drive back into the city, the entire front range of the Rocky Mountains comes into view. At that time you can see the beauty and the magnitude of every piece, each individual mountain, combined in the glory of the entire range. As I'm sure most of you know already, our passage this morning is part of a series of four songs by the prophet Isaiah known as the servant songs. The first song in Isaiah 42 speaks to the servant of the Lord establishing justice on the earth. It speaks of the servant of the Lord who would establish His kingdom of justice that would constitute not only the hope of Israel but the hope of the nations. The second song in chapter 49 shows that the servant's mission is to return Israel back to the Lord, but the servant is too great, too glorious to merely serve as savior to Jacob; He will be a light to the nations. The third song in chapter 50 shows the servant of the Lord demonstrating His faithfulness. It highlights the servant's absolute reliance upon the Lord. And then we come to our text this morning, the fourth servant song, which displays the servant as the one who suffers on behalf of the people of God. Looking at each of these

songs is like looking at an individual mountain; there's so much that can be admired and appreciated, but they are simply part of a bigger whole. This fourth servant songs serves as the culmination of them all, giving the most clear picture of person and work of the servant of the Lord. We all know who this servant is; it is Christ Jesus Himself. It is the servant of the Lord found in Isaiah that is displayed before you today in this sacramental meal. The call to you this morning as you anticipate coming to the Table and feasting upon your Savior, is meditate upon the person and work of Christ Jesus, the servant of the Lord. We will consider Christ the servant by looking at four aspects of this servant: the sorrowful servant, the sacrificed servant, the silent servant, and the satisfied servant.

Let us first turn our attention to look at Christ as the sorrowful servant. We see this in the first three verses of our passage. "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." This is a clear picture of the humiliation of Christ, that the second person of the Godhead took on human flesh and dwelt among us. We don't often think of Christ taking on human flesh as being part of His sufferings, but recall from our sermon just a couple of weeks ago that this is the Lord of Glory who is submitting Himself to be part of this wicked and fallen world. The way He came into the world, and the way in which He presented Himself in it, were nothing like the ideas which the Jews had formed of the Messiah in their own imaginations. It in no way met their expectations concerning Him, but quite the opposite. Instead of this Messiah being born in a palace and wrapped majestic linen and laid in a king's cradle, Christ Jesus came as a babe born of a virgin wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And nothing about Him according to His appearance proclaimed He was the Messiah. He did not have the

stature and build of a mighty warrior who would come to free Israel from the oppressive regime that was the Roman army. He didn't have the good looks that is so often associated with charismatic figures who are able to amass a following, something that would have been needed in order to organize an uprising against the occupying force. No, there was nothing special about Him as far as the eye could tell. To all who looked upon Jesus, He was simply and ordinary man claiming an extraordinary position.

And because of this the people hated Him. John 1:10-11 tells us, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not." This rejection by His own people, the very one's to whom He was sent, added sorrow and pain to His lot. The Jews would have expected that He should live a pleasant life, a life of ease, and have a full enjoyment of all the delights of the peoples everywhere, which would have invited all sorts of people unto Him; but instead, He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It was not only the last part of His life that was such a tragedy, but His whole life was one of tragedy. It was one of misery as it was "one continued chain of labour, sorrow, and consuming pain," as Matthew Henry puts it. As Christ made Himself known to the world, as He revealed Himself unto mankind, the people hid themselves from Him. They turned their back on Him. They despised Him. They rejected Him. He wasn't revered as the King of kings and Lord of lords, but instead as a madman, a traitor, and a blasphemer. I found out not too long ago that Jews don't even read this servant song in their reading of the Tanakh. This is referred to as the forbidden chapter. And it's because His own people still reject Him with just as much vehemence as the ones who killed Him to begin with that they cannot stand to be confronted with Him. They continue to turn their faces away. Friends, this Lord of Glory is presented to you today. He has made His face known to you this morning. I bid you please, do not do as His own people have done by rejecting Him. Instead receive Him, esteem Him, believe Him.

And this great sorrow of the servant leads to even greater misery as the rejection of His people came to a culmination. Here we now turn our attention to Christ as the sacrificed servant. This is made plain to us in verses 4 through 6. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” This servant didn’t simply have His own sorrows but bore ours as well. Grief was His intimate acquaintance; for He acquainted Himself with the grievances of others, and sympathized with them, and He never set His own at a distance. Christ Jesus took on the weight of sin and shame that you could never bear in your own right. And because of this the Lord struck and smote Him. God the Father poured out the very cup of wrath that was reserved for you upon His own Son who was bearing your griefs and sorrows. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him.” This suffering was terrible. Not only had His own countrymen turned their backs on Him, but the Father Himself turned His face from Christ. Christ Jesus, while hanging on that cross after being mercilessly beaten and whipped, cried out to the Father, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” This is the greatest suffering that anyone has ever experienced. He was pierced; He was wounded. He was crushed; He was bruised. He was stricken and smitten. And why? Why did Christ go through this? Why did He voluntarily lay down His life, sacrificing Himself? The answer is in the last part of verse 5, “and with his stripes we are healed.” That is the reason Christ suffered and died. It was for your salvation. It was so that you would be healed.

His sorrows bruised Him. He felt pain from them; they touched Him in the most tender part, especially when God forsook Him on the cross. All along He was smitten with the tongue, when he was

mocked and contradicted, made to be the worst of all peoples, and had all manner of evil said against Him. He was smitten with the hand, with blow after blow. And at last they pierced His hands and His feet, nailing Him to a Roman cross wherefrom His blood flowed forth as a fountain of living water bringing life to all whom it touches. Brothers and sisters, He bore your sin upon His shoulders. It was your sin that held Him to that cross. It was your sin that crushed Him in that last hour. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. This is the death that you should have died. This is the punishment that you should have received. This is the debt that you should have paid. But instead, Christ did it all. What a glorious Gospel this is that we hold fast to, that the second person of the Godhead bore our griefs and carried our sorrows and had laid on Him the iniquity of us all and became that sacrificed servant paying the penalty of our sins so that by His blood, by His stripes, we could be healed. Oh what a glorious Gospel this is. And this is what is displayed before you today in this meal: the bread, which is His body broken for you; the wine, which is His blood poured out for you. He did all of this for you.

And He did all of this willingly. No one forced Him to become the sacrificed servant, but He did it of His own volition. In John 10:17-18 we hear the words of Christ the servant make this very clear, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” And so this great truth leads us to now see Christ as the silent servant. This is made evident in verses 7 through 9. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no

violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.” Why does Isaiah go through such great lengths to show that the servant was silent? In Hebrew literature the repetition of some word or phrase signifies its importance. That is why Isaiah states numerous times that the servant is silent or He opened not His mouth. Because this is important, because this is what testifies to His being the one laying down His life. This is the Lord of all Creation, the one through whom all things were created, the one who by the very word of His voice commanded the wind and the waves to cease from roaring. With a simple utterance He could have ended it all, but He didn’t. He willingly went as a lamb to the slaughter. This perfect passover lamb, who was without spot or blemish, went as a sheep before shearers knowing He was to be butchered, and yet He remained silent; He opened not His mouth.

The Lord tried Him according to the iniquity of His people that was laid upon Him, according to the transgression of His people which He bore in Himself, and God found Him guilty, thus meeting out the punishment that was due the crime. Matthew Henry remarks, “By his wisdom he could have evaded the sentence, and by his power have resisted the execution; but thus it was written, and thus it behoved him to suffer. This commandment he received from his Father, and therefore he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, without any difficulty or reluctance (he is the Lamb of God); and as a sheep is dumb before the shearers, nay, before the butchers, so he opened not his mouth, which denotes not only his exemplary patience under affliction (Ps. 39:9), and his meekness under reproach (Ps. 38:13), but his cheerful compliance with his Father’s will. Not my will, but thine be done.” It was His obedience to the Father’s will that brought Him to utter with His last gasping breath, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” And they took down His body from the cross after having pierced His side to confirm His death. Then Joseph of Arimathea took the body of the Lord and prepared it, placing it in His family grave. And there He laid, the sorrowful, sacrificed servant now utterly silent.

But that's not where He stayed. He didn't stay in that grave for long, because in three days He rose from it victorious. Yes, He suffered. Yes, He died. Yes, He was buried. But He did not stay in the grave; no, He rose conquering death, hell, and the grave. And so now this servant stands not as the sorrowful servant, not as the sacrificed servant, not as the silent servant. But this servant stands now as Christ Jesus the satisfied servant. And we see this in the final three verses of this chapter. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." It pleased the Lord to crush His Son. It pleased the Lord to mete out this punishment on His Son for the iniquities of His people. And the reward that was given unto Christ on that day was the reward of victory over sin and death. He rose victorious. And so now He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. The work for which He came, the work that He did in the life that He lived, the work that He did in perfectly obeying the law of the Lord, the work that He accomplished in sacrificing Himself on the cross, the work that He did in spilling His blood for the remission of sins, that work He shall see the fruit of. So what is the travail of His soul that He will see? It's the coming of His people unto Him. Christ Jesus perfectly paid the penalty for sin. And through His death He perfectly purchased salvation for His people. And everyone for whom Christ died will come to Him. His work was not in vain. Not one drop of His blood was spilled in vain. No, His people will come to Him. He shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. The joy of Christ is in seeing souls come to Him. The joy of Christ is in knowing that He is justifying many, because He bore our iniquities, because He paid the price that we couldn't pay, because He died the death that we should

have died. He has justified His people by the shedding of His blood, and that satisfies this servant.

And then part of this reward is not only seeing soul come to Him but having all things being given unto Him. He is made heir of all things. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto Him. Yes, Christ Jesus is the second person of the Godhead. Yes, He is God Himself, and so He has all things as God. But as the God-man, as the only mediator between God and man, Christ Jesus has been given the riches of all creation. The very creation that by Him was created is now handed to Him as His possession. And so He rules and reigns over all things. He rules with an iron scepter in His hand. He crushes the enemies under His feet. And He has all things as His footstool. So here we see Christ Jesus, the victorious Lamb of God, ruling and reigning forever, and the call upon you today is to recognize that. You must see Him not simply as Savior but also as Lord. He is the Lord of all creation. He's the Lord over all peoples. He's the Lord over all nations. So all of creation, all peoples, all nations are called to bow down before Him. All peoples in all nations and in all places are called to come before the Son and to kiss Him lest they perish in the way. This is the Gospel. Christ risen victorious, the satisfied servant, is the culmination of the Gospel. Without this nothing else matters. He could have been sorrowful; He could have been sacrificed; He could have been silent; but if He is not risen and satisfied with the travail of His soul then none of that mattered, and He died in vain. But that is not the God that we worship. That is not the Christ that we see here in our text. We have a risen Savior.

Brothers and sisters, this is the Gospel. How beautiful is that! How beautiful is it that we have a risen Savior who dwells among us and continues to make intercession for us before the Father for the transgressions of the many. He is our high priest. He is the sacrificed Lamb of God who took away the sins of the world, but He is also our actively interceding high priest who advocated for us before the Father. He is our sympathetic high priest because He has

experienced the suffering of this world. He has experienced the trials that we face. He has been tempted with the same temptations as you. So He sympathizes with us in every way. What a glorious Gospel this is, that our Christ, our Messiah, our Savior did not stay in the grave but rose victorious. And He rules and reigns as mediator over all things and serves as intercessor before the Father, and He pleads our case on our behalf before the Father. It is through the work, it is through the actions of Christ the servant that we are saved.

So friends, as you come to this Table, remember this great salvation that you have in Christ. Remember what He went through: how He was sorrowful, how He was sacrificed, how He was silent. And He did it all for you. Remember how His own rejected Him. Remember how He was beaten and scorned and mocked. Remember how they placed a crown of thorns upon His head and a robe upon His shoulders, and they blasphemously mocked Him saying ‘hail king of the Jews,’ and He did that for you. Remember how He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, how the nails were driven into His hands and His feet, and as He bled on the cross that blood flowing forth washed away your sins and made you white as snow. Remember that His body was broken for you and His blood was poured out for you. And remember that Christ Jesus is risen victorious, and that He is the ruler and Savior of all creation, and He lives to make intercession forever on your behalf before the Father. Brothers and sisters, let us meditate upon Christ Jesus, that great servant of the Lord.